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DEPARTMENT OF STATE TELEGRAM

MFG. 9/69

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SUBJ: DELINEATION OF THE THAI/LAOS BOUNDARY SIN THE MEKONG RIVER

REF: A) STATE CA-855 OF FEBRUARY 10, 1969
B) BANGKOK A-129 OF MARCH 12, 1969

1. ROYAL THAI SURVEY DEPARTMENT (RTSD) AND THE U.S. ARMY TOPOGRAPHIC COMMAND (USATOPOCOM) CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN JOINT LARGE-SCALE MAPPING PROJECT. IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, THAI/LAO MEKONG RIVER BOUNDARY ISSUE RE-RAISED BY RTSD. RTSD POSITION IN THIS MATTER APPARENTLY REMAINS SAME AS DESCRIBED YEAR AGO IN REF. - (I.E., REFUSAL TO ACCEPT 1926 TREATY AND 1931 MAPS AS MOST RECENT VALID BASIS FOR DELINEATION OF THE FLUVIAL BOUNDARY BETWEEN LAOS AND THAILAND.)

2. WE UNDERSTAND FROM USATOPOCOM THAT RTSD RECENTLY SUBMITTED PROBLEM TO MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. IN LIGHT OF PROSPECT THIS MATTER POSSIBLY BEING RAISED TO POLITICAL LEVEL. EMBASSY COMMENTS ARE REQUESTED. DEPARTMENT PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN PROBABLY POLITICAL IMPACT THIS ISSUE.

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A) DOES EMBASSY BANGKOK CONSIDER STANCE RECOMMENDED IN REF. B. STILL APPROPRIATE?

B) WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT ASSESSMENT LIKELY RTG POLITICAL CLIMATE ON THIS MATTER?

C) DO YOU BELIEVE BASIC QUESTION OF THE LEGAL BOUNDARY SHOULD BE PRESSED AT THIS JUNCTURE OR THAT IT MORE PRUDENT (AND PERHAPS ULTIMATELY MORE EFFICIENT-- GIVEN EVER-PRESENT POSSIBILITY CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN AOS AND ALWAYS SENSITIVE THAI/LAO RELATIONS) TO DEFER REAL QUESTION?

C) IF FORMER, WHAT OF POSSIBILITY TELLING THAI WE COULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN REVISING THE MAPS IF THEY CONTINUE INSIST ON DISCLAIMER AS BASIS DRAWING BOUNDARIES?

IF WE DEFER QUESTION, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR POLITICAL REACTION TO IDEA OF SHOWING BOUNDARY SYMBOL WHERE THERE ARE NO RPT NO ISLANDS AND ELIMINATION OF SYMBOL WHERE THERE ARE RPT ARE ISLANDS? THIS WOULD ESCHEW ISSUE FOR NOW AND ALLOW THE PRESENT MAPPING REVISION PROJECT TO PROCEED. WOULD THE THAI BE PARTICULARLY AMENABLE TO SUCH A TACTIC?

A THIRD POSSIBILITY EXISTS. THE THAI MIGHT DRAW BOUNDARIES AS THEY WISH BUT REMOVE ALL DESIGNATIONS IDENTIFYING THE MAP AS US PRODUCT, THUS AVOIDING GIVING ERRONEOUS IMPRESSION MAPS REFLECT US OFFICIAL RECOGNITION OF BOUNDARY AS DELINEATED.

3. DEPARTMENT INCLINED AVOID REAL ISSUE FOR PRESENT AND NOT PRESS THAI ON DEFINING THE QUESTIONABLE AREAS. BELIEVE PROXIMATE OBJECTIVE SHOULD BE PURSUIT OF BEST METHOD TO ASSURE CURRENT MAPPING PROJECT PROCEEDS Apace WHILE RISKS OF THAI-US AND THAI-LAO FRICTION ARE KEPT TO MINIMUM. REQUEST EMBASSY REPLY ASAP.
ROGERS

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